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ASSISTANT SECRETARY

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Mr. Bundy:

Attached for your
information.

Foy D. Kohler

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Reply of N. S. Khrushchev
to the President's letter of February 14

Khrushchev's 14-page reply expresses his disappointment over the President's negative reply to his proposal that the 18-nation Disarmament Committee be begun at the Heads of State level. Khrushchev repeats previous arguments that only the Heads of Government have the necessary authority to formulate policy. He takes issue with some of the arguments advanced by the President against his proposal, claiming disappointment over the argument that more preliminary work needs to be done. Khrushchev insists that there has been a mass of such work already and that what is needed is not further clarification of positions but how to overcome the differences between well-known positions. He argues that the necessary degree of trust for the solution of the disarmament problem can only be achieved by the Heads of Government and asserts that meetings between Heads of Government will lead to better understanding of the desires of each. Khrushchev accuses the President of not yet having the determination to seek a solution of the disarmament problem and of having already condemned the forthcoming 18-nation negotiations to failure. The refusal to meet at the highest level, he claims, is to be able to blame the Foreign Ministers for this failure.

Khrushchev

Khrushchev takes issue with the President's position on control, asserting that the US and its allies seek to force the USSR to place its entire military establishment under foreign control and open up its entire defense system before disarmament has even begun. He rejects this categorically and repeats familiar arguments as to Soviet willingness to agree to genuine inspection by stages. He again charges that Western proposals amount to espionage and that various Western proposals add up to trickery designed to bury the problem of disarmament. He again attacks Western unwillingness to liquidate foreign bases and says that the USSR is willing to withdraw its overseas forces if the West will do likewise.

Khrushchev then says that perhaps the position taken by the President and Prime Minister Macmillan is tied to the US intention to resume atmospheric testing. He reasserts that if this happens the USSR will do likewise and the blame will lie on the governments of the US and UK.

Khrushchev concludes by expressing the hope that the President has not said his last word regarding a meeting at the Heads of State level.

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However, after your reply to my message, the situation looks entirely different.

According to your message, you believe that even if participation by the Heads of Government in disarmament negotiations is possible it should be postponed until such time when definite progress has been reached in negotiations. But the legitimate question arises -- who, then, can ensure with the

greatest probability of success such progress, who can create a favorable situation for negotiations? Those who are vested with the full breadth of authority and who have the leading role in shaping policy or, on the other hand, those who are not vested with such responsibility and consequently are limited in their actions by previously determined instructions? It seems to me that there can be no two answers to this question. It is clear that the Heads of Government have much greater possibilities for this than anybody else.

The question may also be raised in the following manner: what is better, what will yield greater benefits -- leadership exercised by the Heads of Government from a distance, or on the other hand when they themselves, having rolled up their sleeves, undertake the most difficult and give a correct orientation to the negotiations and ensure the progress of which you speak in your message.

As for me, the guiding precept of my life is to be where the main work is being done, where it is most important to obtain success. As I understand it, the position of Head of State requires this. If we remained far from Geneva, we would, whether we wanted it or not, have to consider the problems

arising in the course of the disarmament negotiations merely as one among many other important matters with which officials in our position have to deal every day.

Frankly, I am surprised at the inconsistency in certain arguments advanced in your message. You agree that the Heads of Government should assume personal responsibility for the success of the disarmament negotiations to be opened in Geneva on March 14 of this year. But at the same time you propose that we wait until the Ministers of Foreign Affairs have achieved definite progress. Well, if, as was the case in the past, disarmament negotiations should fail to make progress -- what then, should the Heads of State wash their hands? But then what will there be left of their personal responsibility for the course of negotiations, the importance of which you emphasize in your message? No, you can not really make these things jibe.

Nor do I find convincing your statement that before it becomes possible for the Heads of State to examine the situation arising in the disarmament negotiations there should be done a great deal of work in clarifying the positions of the sides. I shall go even further and say that your statement that something is yet to be fully clarified was extremely

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To say, then, that somebody still has to engage in clarifying positions - that is simply refusal to attempt to direct disarmament negotiations in a practical channel.

If the previous negotiations have really left certain questions unanswered, then this is apparently not at all because little effort has been made to clarify them. As I have already indicated, disarmament intrudes in the sacrosanctum of every state, in the area of ensuring their security, which, in the present world situation, everybody prefers to keep far from the eyes of others. A certain degree of trust and responsibility, without which it is impossible even to come close to the solution of disarmament problems, can therefore be reached only among those who bear the highest responsibility before the peoples of their countries for their security. And nobody else but the Heads of Government (State) bear such responsibility. Moreover, many of them would have to assume the leadership of the armed forces of their countries should times of trial occur. Nor is it necessary to prove that personal contacts among Heads of State can sooner lead to a better understanding of one another's aspirations, greater trust, and as a consequence - who knows - perhaps even new ideas.

If the experience of previous disarmament negotiations has been in any way useful, then it is primarily because it has demonstrated how few practical moves in the matter of disarmament one can expect without the most direct and businesslike participation in negotiations of officials holding the highest position. It is precisely because the positions of the participants in negotiations have been overly clarified that the conclusion arises by itself that only such officials can move the disarmament question off dead center, if, of course, all parties desire this.

Therefore neither Ministers, whatever esteem they may enjoy on the part of the governments and the peoples of their countries, nor other representatives, whatever their rank, will achieve anything if the Heads of State do not place the negotiations on a solid foundation, having demonstrated the will and desire to reach agreement on disarmament problems.

If you have no desire to head now the U.S. Delegation to the negotiations in the 13-Nation Committee and you use in explanation of your position such an artificial argument as lack of appropriate preparations, then this can only indicate that the resolution to reach agreement on disarmament questions has not yet become ripe in your mind. There

unavoidably arises the question - is it not, Mr. President, because in your own mind you have already condemned the 18-Nation Committee to failure and are thinking in advance in terms of this Committee's failing to ensure the solution of the questions for which it has been created that you do not wish to go to Geneva now? It appears that the Western Powers are not yet ready for a disarmament agreement and you therefore think that for the time being it is more convenient to keep somewhat aside from the negotiations on this question. This is how all thinking people will have to assess your unwillingness to have the Disarmament Committee meet at the highest level.

To unload the work in the 18-Nation Committee on the Ministers of Foreign Affairs is to demonstrate clearly - and the Ministers will, of course, understand this - that the Heads of Government, the Heads of State, do not wish to assume the responsibility for a possible failure of negotiations and prefer that all sins be charged to the Ministers.

It is easy to imagine what the situation may turn out to be in ^{the} final analysis. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who are busy people, transfer - and this happens quite frequently - the conduct of negotiations to persons of a

somewhat lower rank and those, in turn, to officials who are another step lower on the ladder. This is how it turns out that negotiations, as a matter of fact, are finally conducted among bureaucrats. And then try to find out where that personal responsibility of the Heads of Government for negotiations, of which you now speak, actually is.

In your message of February 14, you, Mr. President, refer to the fact that there are substantial differences between our countries in the question of control of disarmament. That is correct, such differences exist, but what is their root? You seek the Soviet Union's agreement to the establishment of control not only over armed forces and armaments which are being reduced or destroyed under the agreement but also over that portion which will remain in the possession of states for the time being. It appears that the U.S. and its allies would like to have the Soviet Union place under control all of its armed forces and open up its entire defense system even before disarmament has really begun.

I must say frankly that with such an approach to the question of control you will attain nothing because to this we will not agree.

The Soviet Union is interested in the establishment of the strictest international control over the fulfillment of a disarmament agreement. If, for instance, we reach agreement on general and complete disarmament in stages, then, in our opinion, the implementation of all disarmament measures provided for each stage must be thoroughly verified. We want no less than anybody else to have assurance that the armaments and armed forces to be liquidated at a given stage are actually being liquidated or are being treated in such a manner as had been agreed in advance and recorded in the Treaty. This precisely is real, effective control over disarmament. On the other hand, you propose not control over disarmament but something entirely different.

Let us imagine that we are negotiating reduction of the armed forces of our countries by several divisions. We are prepared to agree to this.

But you demand that control be established not only over the disbanding of those divisions but over all of the armed forces and armaments that are at the disposal of states. This is really like the saying: "A ruble for a lamb with ten rubles for change".

In the age of rocket and nuclear weapons - and we have

entered that age - masses of troops have far less significance than they had in the first and second world wars. Today, war would immediately assume an all-embracing, universal character and its outcome would depend not on the actions of troops placed at the line dividing the belligerent parties but rather on the application of rocket and nuclear weapons, with which the deciding strike can be made even before mass armies have been mobilized and introduced into combat.

Thus, under modern conditions reduction of the armed forces of states by several divisions would in no way change the situation. Control over the military potential of states which you wish to obtain in exchange for an essentially insignificant reduction in armed forces, is another matter. The establishment of such control would yield a major strategic advantage to the state planning aggression.

The control proposed by the Western Powers, i.e., control actually before disarmament, we regard with full justification as espionage. Such control would permit an aggressive state to place its intelligence agents on the territories of peace-loving states and to collect information about their defense systems: and then to decide the question whether to agree to further disarmament or turn the course of events toward war.

We do not wish this. The Soviet Union strives for an honest agreement which would provide guarantee that neither during the process of disarmament nor after its completion a threat to the security of any state will arise. This is why we say - let us work out a treaty on general and complete disarmament under the strictest international control and let us implement the provisions of that treaty in stages so that control be commensurate with the disarmament steps undertaken. Having completed one stage of disarmament under control let us move to the implementation of the next stage, also under control. This is a sound, realistic approach to the question of control, and so far no one has been able to propose a better one.

In the initial stages of disarmament there will of course remain some armed forces and armaments which will temporarily be outside the sphere of international control. But will this change anything as compared with what we have today? After all, even now we ^{do not} know exactly the amounts of armaments at the disposal of the other side. Under staged disarmament we will reduce the armed forces and armaments by agreed increments and therefore the correlation of forces and the

balance which has by now been established will not be disturbed. As to the amount of armed forces and armaments on which we will have no exact data after the completion of each stage, it will constantly decrease until it comes down to zero.

Where then, does this involve a threat to strategic security of states? There is no such threat and it cannot exist with this approach.

This can in no way be said about proposals of the Western Powers. In insisting that control march before disarmament the Western Powers only strengthen the suspicions that they are pursuing any possible objective other than disarmament. The impression is created that some kind of a disarmament game is being played. The peoples of the entire world demand disarmament, they want to throw off their shoulders the burden of military expenditures, to clear the horizon of the thunder clouds of war, while the Western Powers do not feel like disarming. This is why all sorts of plans appear, deliberately calculated to be rejected by the other side. All this resembles trickery which is resorted to in order to bury a live cause.

Now how else can one assess such recipes for disarmament

as provide for the reduction in troops by one percent and for the extension of control over all of the other ninety-nine percent of armed forces? How else can one understand the refusal of the Western Powers to reduce the scope of their military preparations at least to some extent, for example, to liquidate the military bases in foreign territories and to withdraw their troops from Europe to the confines of their states. The Soviet Union is prepared even now to bring home its troops which are outside the country if the Western Powers do the same.

Where is there to be found here real partnership, understanding of the aspirations of the peoples, and the desire to remove the danger of a rocket and nuclear war, which would bring unbelievable disaster and suffering to all of mankind? There is not even a trace of that.

With this attitude on the part of the Governments of the Western Powers toward the cause of disarmament, where behind ostensible bustle around the questions of control there is being pushed somewhere into the backyard the main thing - disarmament of the military establishment of states, one has really to fear lest the new Committee is facing the sorry lot of its predecessors. If there is no desire to agree

on a realistic basis, then obviously disarmament negotiations will amount to nothing, whether the work of the Committee started with the participation of the Heads of Government or at the Foreign Minister level, or any other level.

I am not used to playing the hypocrite and hiding the truth in my pocket and therefore shall say without beating around the bush: Your reply message, Mr. President, as well as the message from Prime Minister Macmillan have generated in me the feeling that those journalists who see some special purposes in your proposal to begin the work of the 13-Nation Committee at the Foreign Minister level are perhaps right. They connect this proposal directly with the statement of the Governments of the United States and Great Britain about their intention to resume nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere.

What is the reasoning of the journalists? They understand that the Soviet Union will not leave that aggressive ^{unrestrained} action unanswered. The ~~knowledge~~ desire on the part of the United States and Great Britain to increase their nuclear arsenal and to increase the destructive power of their

nuclear weapons will unavoidably lead to the Soviet Union's being drawn into competition in the sphere of accumulation and perfection of nuclear weapons. It is understandable that the Soviet Union, which incidentally has conducted far fewer experimental nuclear explosions, will not wish to lag behind and will do everything to maintain its nuclear weapons at the proper level. As a result, swings will be set in motion to heights never seen before, raising the nuclear armaments race to ever-higher levels. Naturally, the peoples will place the responsibility for this on the Governments of the United States and Great Britain.

It is in connection with this that it is being said that in advancing the idea of conducting disarmament negotiations at the Ministerial level, the Governments of the United States and Great Britain sought somehow to paralyze the negative attitude of public opinion toward the planned resumption of nuclear tests and to sweeten the bitter pill by making a gesture in the direction of disarmament. This opinion became even stronger when the United States and Great Britain replied in the negative to the concrete, businesslike proposal of the Soviet Union to begin the work of the disarmament committee at the highest level with

participation by the Heads of Government, a proposal that gives greater assurance of success in negotiations. As much as I would like to avoid unpleasant words -- but the conclusion imposes itself that apparently there is some truth in such commentaries by journalists.

Where then is the matter going? We live in a time when science and technology are developing swiftly and new scientific and technological achievements are born literally not every day but every hour. Rocket and nuclear armaments are ever increasing and now both we and you already have thousands of units of such weapons. They are manned by many thousands of personnel and that number is ever increasing as the number of rockets increases. But the more people are assigned to the manning of lethal rockets and nuclear weapons, the greater the probability that the unexpected may occur. After all, there have already been cases in the United States where bombers on alert missions with a payload of nuclear bombs had accidents and fell to the ground causing considerable unpleasant consequences.

And is it really out of the question that something similar can happen not only with bombers but also with rockets equipped with thermonuclear warheads? In addition

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millions upon millions of people, while many would be condemned to slow death as a result of radioactive contamination.

All this brings to mind once again that the leading officials of states, who bear the responsibility for the destinies of peoples, must realize the actual state of affairs which has already been brought about by the rocket and nuclear armaments race and to which this race is leading. General and complete disarmament, that is, complete destruction of all armaments, particularly nuclear, has become in our time a vitally necessary task, which stands above everything else. In the interests of the speediest solution of this task the Soviet Government has been and still is for having the 16-Nation Disarmament Committee begin its work at the highest level.

The search for agreement on disarmament problems requires that unnecessary punctiliousness be cast aside and that the interests of the cause, the interests of strengthening peace, be placed above everything else. This is why I should like to hope that you, Mr. President, have not yet said your last word concerning your participation in the negotiations in the 16-Nation Disarmament Committee.

The Soviet Government sincerely seeks to reach agreement on disarmament and has proposed with the best of intentions that the work of the 12-Nation Committee be begun at the highest level.

The Soviet Government believes that the proposals for general and complete disarmament under strict international control advanced by it provide a basis for reaching agreement without prejudice to any individual party and without advantage to any other party. Of course we are prepared to consider other proposals as well if they really will ensure the solution of the problem of general and complete disarmament.

If the Governments of the Western Powers desire agreement on disarmament problems - and the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries do wish to reach it - then one could definitely hope that negotiations with the participation of the Heads of Government will yield tangible results, and agreement will become possible. This would be a great honor to those who would have laid, at the beginning of the negotiations, the foundation for a future agreement and found ways of overcoming the existing difficulties. And what a great reward it would be for the Heads of Government, Heads of State, then to sign

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a treaty on general and complete disarmament and to become participants in an historic event which would remain in the memories of all mankind for ages to come.

Respectfully,

N. Khrushchev

Moscow
February 21, 1962